

THE 2017 WHOLE AGENDA



**The Connecticut Association
of Boards of Education
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Governance

• PUBLIC EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITY •

CABE believes that all citizens, including board members, the Governor, the Connecticut General Assembly, and the State Board of Education, must make public education a matter of the highest priority of public policy. The state must heed its constitutional mandate to provide a free and appropriate public education for all of Connecticut's children.

• LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION •

CABE believes that local governance of public education through locally elected or appointed community members strengthens the democratic process, provides accountability, and assures strong continuing public support for education.

CABE believes that the state and federal governments must recognize the wide differences among America's public school districts, including those that are rural or small, by funding the development of school improvement programs that reflect local needs and characteristics.

• EDUCATION AS THE FIRST PRIORITY FOR CHILDREN •

CABE believes that public policy must assist children and their families in maintaining education as the first priority for children amidst the continuing economic and social pressures of society.

CABE supports the maintenance of the state's traditional labor laws protections for children in order to preserve education as a child's first priority and therefore believes it is undesirable to expand legal employment for children of compulsory school age.

• CREATING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH ECONOMIC, RACIAL AND ETHNIC INTEGRATION •

CABE believes that each child must have equal access to effective free, public education and to the services of well-educated and skillful teachers.

CABE supports efforts by the State of Connecticut:

1. to address and solve the issues of social and economic isolation in the areas of housing, transportation, employment, access to health care and social services; and
2. to make the necessary funding available to urban, suburban and rural school districts across the state to develop and sustain integrated educational programs and exchanges that create educational excellence.

CABE urges all districts:

1. to affirm that all children can learn and accept the challenge to educate each child to his/her fullest potential;
2. to enter into interdistrict partnerships which create integrated educational excellence and promote social, cultural, ethnic and racial exchange and interaction among diverse groups;
3. to continue their efforts to increase the recruitment of qualified individuals who reflect this state's diversity to the teaching profession and administration;
4. to make parents as well as the greater community full partners in the education of all children; and
5. to recognize their critical role in creating policies, providing training, and maintaining oversight to ensure that students have equal educational opportunities and are treated equitably as provide by the laws of the State of Connecticut, including but not limited to, §10-15c and §46a-58, regardless of gender, race, color, creed, religion, alienage, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

• 21st CENTURY SKILLS •

CABE urges the state and federal government to support programs and research that focus on problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, and other high-level 21st Century skills that are important for success in a global workplace. The state and federal government should support school district capacity to provide the technology and tools necessary to foster innovative learning practices and instructional methods that bridge school and real-world experiences, provide for greater personalization of education, and prepare students for college and/or career.

• FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL EDUCATION OPERATIONS •

CABE urges members of Congress and the executive branch to carefully consider the impact of their actions or lack of action upon local boards of education. Enactment of laws, reauthorizations, and regulation has immediate impact upon local operations. Delay or failure to act in response to valid requests for modification of laws or regulations causes material impact upon districts' ability to manage and cause unnecessary additional expense, a major concern in a challenging budget environment.

• PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE •

CABE believes that all public schools should provide a quality education for each student. CABE believes that in meeting local educational needs, locally developed policies and program options which give parents the opportunity to select public schools or programs for their children should be considered among a variety of possible educational strategies. However, CABE opposes federal or state efforts to mandate choice, including efforts to divert or limit funding intended for existing federal and state programs.

Any program allowing parents to choose schools must assure that:

- (A) the plan does not foster racial, social, or economic segregation or segregation of children with disabilities;
- (B) financial and other administrative issues, such as transportation concerns, and the costs for special education and expelled students are addressed;
- (C) the plan is not part of a federal or state voucher or tuition tax credit program to finance non-public education;
- (D) students be required to make at least a one-year commitment to a school of choice to afford stability of school management;
- (E) interdistrict transfers must have the consent of both school districts;
- (F) urban districts are encouraged to develop programs to attract suburban students;
- (G) student academic achievement must be monitored in all schools receiving public funds; and
- (H) budgets be made public.

• COORDINATION OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES •

CABE urges the state, local, and federal government to support interagency partnerships to connect children and families with comprehensive services such as special education, counseling, health, nutrition, family support and juvenile delinquency prevention.

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards to develop a process for structuring voluntary inter-agency partnerships.

• DRUG, TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL USE •

CABE supports efforts on the local, state and federal level to eliminate and address the problems of the inappropriate, unauthorized, illegal use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol and other substances among students, staff, and others in the school environment.

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards:

1. to work cooperatively with public and private agencies and law enforcement agencies to address the problems of drugs, tobacco, alcohol and other substances;
2. to work cooperatively with public and private agencies to provide student-guided extended day school programs for appropriate grade levels during after school hours; and
3. to conduct student drug, tobacco, alcohol, and substance use assessment on an on-going basis.

CABE urges the State of Connecticut:

1. to vigorously enforce the laws concerning the sale, use and possession of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other substances to minors;
2. to commit adequate resources and create a functioning network of public and private agencies to address the problems of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other substances;
3. to allow more flexibility in the design and delivery of curriculum to address the use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other substances;
4. to gather data on student drug, tobacco, alcohol, and substance use; and
5. to commit resources to support student-guided extended day programs for appropriate grade levels.

CABE urges the federal government:

1. to aggressively enforce the laws in order to halt the flow of illegal drugs into the United States; and
2. to commit adequate federal resources to state and local programs that address the problems of drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse.

• CLIMATE, CULTURE, SAFETY AND SECURITY •

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards:

1. To address the influence of violence affecting children through school board policies, parent education programs, peer mediation, student assisting teams, and the school district curriculum to maintain an environment that fosters learning and growth.
2. To develop, review and maintain safety plans that address prevention, preparedness, mitigation and emergency response and recovery.
3. To address environmental, health and safety risks, as well as potential security breaches in coordination with appropriate local, state and federal agencies.

CABE urges the state and federal government to provide greater and sustained resources for locally determined programs that are critical to school safety, including emergency preparedness school resource officers, school counseling, and response training and inter agency coordination.

CABE also urges greater and sustained resources that expand access to mental health services and support comprehensive wraparound services to schools that include a range of community resources to address safety and intervention.

• STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND ASSESSMENT •

1. CABE urges all Connecticut boards of education to provide strong leadership to raise student achievement, and to create a school climate that fosters academic and personal development.
2. CABE urges boards of education, the State Board of Education and the General Assembly to recognize the broad range of attributes that contribute to student suc-

cess, including but not limited to academic achievement, critical thinking, community service and integrity.

3. CABE urges the state and federal government to provide resources to support high quality professional development related to assessment for all certified staff.
4. CABE urges the Connecticut State Department of Education to increase support and funding for educational programs supporting arts.
5. CABE urges the state to create and fund a system designed to share successful curricula and/or programs enhancing student achievement among school districts using the State Department of Education and Regional Education Service Centers.
6. CABE urges the state and federal government to provide on-going funding resources and technical assistance to districts to evaluate assessment data and allow greater use of data-driven decision making in the adjustment of curriculum and instructional practice.
7. CABE supports efforts to improve student assessment programs that enhance individual student achievement and are part of a planned program for meeting educational objectives. CABE is opposed to a federal testing program.
8. CABE urges the State Department of Education to provide boards of education with explanatory and instructional materials one full year prior to implementing any new or revised statewide assessments.
9. CABE urges school boards to affirm their commitment to the improvement of student learning and to:
 - Openly evaluate data on student achievement indicators;
 - Discuss processes that affect the instructional program;
 - Examine the impact of the district's course of study on learning;
 - Review/revise district goals to focus on student progress;
 - Strive to find methods to remove barriers to learning;
 - Inform district staff, students, parents, and the community about student achievement in the schools; and
 - Promote an excitement for learning.
10. Further, CABE calls on the governor, state legislature and state education boards and

administrators to reexamine public school accountability systems in this state, and to develop a system based on multiple forms of assessment, which does not require extensive standardized testing, more accurately reflects the broad range of student learning, and is used to support students and improve schools.

• TIMELY RELEASE OF DATA •

CABE urges the Connecticut State Department of Education to provide assessment data and educational program evaluations in a timely manner to allow local districts to modify instructional programs to effect change that the assessment data pertains to.

• THE LEGISLATIVE – SCHOOL BOARD PARTNERSHIP •

CABE urges local school boards to provide legislators with objective analysis of proposed legislation.

CABE urges members of the Legislature to exercise restraint when addressing education issues that impact local operations. Overly prescriptive law or regulation inhibits local capacity to innovate and best serve its public.

CABE supports a requirement that a local impact study be conducted before any education laws/policies are enacted by the legislature or regulations are adopted by the Connecticut Department of Education. The local impact study shall include costs and benefits of such law/policy/regulation.

• CONNECTICUT CORE STANDARDS •

CABE is committed to the successful implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards, with sufficient professional development, funding and resources to ensure success, and to inform and engage parents in the process.

• STATE TESTING IN GRADES 4, 6, 8, and 10/11 •

CABE urges Congress to mandate student testing in grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 or 11 in the areas of English language arts and mathematics.

• KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL AGE ENTRY •

CABE urges the State Legislators to adopt the date for Entry into Kindergarten to be five years old on or before September 1st.

• EDUCATOR EVALUATION AND SUPPORT •

In light of the substantial changes in the roles and responsibilities of educators created by the new evaluation and support system, CABE urges the Legislature and State Department of Education to provide sufficient time, fiscal and support resources to enable districts to implement this important initiative. CABE urges the Department to continue to review the guidelines based on the experience with implementation.

CABE also urges the State Department of Education and State Legislature to support a strong teacher induction and performance program to improve the retention of new teachers in Connecticut.

• STUDENT SUCCESS •

CABE urges local and regional boards of education:

1. to develop innovative, developmentally appropriate curriculum which emphasizes the acquisition of essential skills for all students; and
2. to develop and maintain creative school programs, and performance standards for at risk students that develop lifelong learners. Such programs should emphasize essential skills combined with work related projects, work study programs, school to career, apprenticeships and other alternative program approaches that stress essential skills and practical applications.

CABE urges state education policy makers to provide the funding and the flexibility necessary for local and regional school systems to address the needs of students such as with appropriate increases in funding for dropout prevention and student retention. CABE urges the retention of the right of school boards to deny programs for individuals pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10 233d(e). (Student Expulsion)

• TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS •

CABE supports a state technical high school system that

- ensures both student academic success, and trade/technology mastery;
- instills a desire for lifelong learning;
- prepares students for post-secondary education, apprenticeships, and immediate productive employment; and
- responds to employers' and industries' current and emerging global workforce needs and expectations through business/school partnerships.

• TRUANCY •

CABE urges the State Board of Education and the Connecticut General Assembly to support, through technical assistance and funding, early intervention programs developed by local school districts that involve the interagency coordination of services to students who are habitual truants or at risk of becoming truants.

• STUDENT DISCIPLINE •

CABE urges districts to establish comprehensive student discipline policies that integrate in school and out of school sanctions with an overall program of progressive student discipline. Policies should reinforce a positive school climate and ensure consequences with equity in alignment with the Department of Education and the Department of Justice current guidelines.

• REPORTING OF IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS •

CABE urges the State Department of Education to modify the guidance so in-school suspension is not considered an absence from school.

• PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS •

CABE urges:

1. the State Department of Education to encourage locally initiated, innovative alternative approaches to educating students who are English learners with the specific goal of attaining English proficiency as rapidly as possible; and
2. the state legislature to appropriate adequate

funding to assist school boards in providing the most effective programs which educate students who are English learners.

• MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION •

CABE urges all boards of education to facilitate culturally responsive teaching and supervision that promotes understanding of and respect for the many diverse cultures which strengthen our democratic society.

• EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN •

CABE urges local and regional boards of education to review their kindergarten and readiness programs to assure that such programs are designed to provide each child with learning tasks appropriate to the child's developmental level.

CABE urges boards of education to encourage parents to take advantage of school services for young children.

• EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION LINKING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT •

CABE supports:

1. continued efforts by the General Assembly to appropriate sufficient funding to make early care and education programs available to all children in need;
2. joint efforts by the State Department of Education and other public and private child and family service agencies to promote and encourage a wide range of public and private provider preschool programs and services to co exist and prosper statewide;
3. local school board flexibility to design, develop and implement early childhood education programs to increase the likelihood of children's school success and decrease special education costs;
4. state and federal incentive grants, including technical and financial assistance to districts that offer early childhood education programs, full or extended day kindergartens and programs providing for identification of preschool students with special needs; and
5. federal, state and municipal initiatives for private industry, non-profit organizations, public agencies, and school systems, to develop high-quality facilities to provide daytime child care, in addition to those that already exist.

CABE urges local districts to institute programs for parents which can increase their knowledge of children's social, physical, mental and psychological development, and ultimately increase the likelihood of children's school success. CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to provide incentive grants and on-going matching funding for this essential program.

• PARENT/FAMILY/SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT POLICY •

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards to develop Parent/Family/School Involvement Policy statements recognizing that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and the family. Such statements could include:

- a. Establishing effective two-way communication with all parents, respecting the diversity and differing needs of families.
- b. Developing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education.
- c. Providing support and coordination for school staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement from PreK-12.
- d. Utilizing schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support.

• FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION •

CABE urges each local school district to utilize a developmentally appropriate curriculum which deals with issues affecting family life, child and human growth and development, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) and to involve the community in this process, including appropriate public and private agencies, to promote the positive well-being of students. Vital health and social issues should be integrated into existing academic subject areas.

• LOCAL PROGRAM POLICY DECISIONS •

CABE supports the local development of specific subject area requirements, course content requirements, and staff and resource requirements that:

1. grow out of local goals and specific local learning objectives based upon local student needs;

2. result from local policy decisions regarding program, staffing and resource priorities; and
3. result from local policy decisions regarding effective and efficient practices including the use of appropriate technology.

• TEACHER TENURE •

CABE urges the state legislature to modify the teacher tenure law to provide for initial tenure after 50 months of teaching, to make tenure renewable on a five-year basis, and to provide for the dismissal of teachers who fail to promote student achievement or fail to engage in activities to pursue professional growth and development.

CABE urges the legislature to repeal the portion of 10-151(c) of the General Statutes that entitles teachers who have not attained tenure to a hearing concerning non-renewal, except if the reason for such non-renewal is either elimination of position or loss of position to another teacher, and provides that the local or regional board of education shall rescind a non-renewal decision only if the board finds such decision to be arbitrary and capricious.

CABE urges the state legislature to amend the teacher tenure act to allow school boards the ability to address staff reduction forced by budgetary constraints through modified reduction in staffing. The modification to the present system of tenure would allow local school districts to reduce staffing levels not solely through the current seniority system, but through a blended reduction throughout the seniority system, such that staffing cuts do not fall entirely upon the most junior educators.

• GOVERNMENT REGULATION AND DATA ACQUISITION •

CABE urges:

1. the state and federal governments to reduce the number and complexity of regulations directed at education, including the paperwork burden associated with implementing education laws;
2. the State Department of Education to continue existing efforts to simplify its data collection forms, eliminate duplication and unnecessary data collection and promote appropriate use of data;
3. the state and federal governments to focus on data that is needed to improve student performance;

4. the state board of education to formally adopt regulations when rules are needed to enforce the statutes and to refrain from applying guidelines as regulations or incorporating guidelines by reference into regulations; and
5. the Connecticut General Assembly to refrain from circumventing the regulatory development process through legislation requiring adherence to guidelines.

• FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT •

CABE urges:

1. the establishment of a formalized process, including input from local public agencies, for proposing candidates for membership on the Freedom of Information Commission;
2. the modification of the Connecticut Freedom of Information law to more clearly define the individuals' reasonable expectation of privacy and its balance with the public's right to know;
3. the legislature continues to support release of detailed student performance data to parents and guardians as part of the regular education process while it acts to protect against inappropriate disclosure to others; and
4. the legislature act to protect against inappropriate use of content from student data bases.

• CERTIFIED EDUCATOR SHORTAGES •

CABE urges school boards, higher education institutions, the State Department of Education and the state legislature to take action to expand the pool of qualified educators for Connecticut's public schools, particularly in areas where shortages have been identified. Among the actions to be considered should be expanding the alternate route to certification programs, enhancing professional development opportunities, expanding reciprocity between states, reducing bureaucracy for educators certified in other states, encouraging students at an early age to consider the teaching profession and actively recruiting underrepresented groups.

• CONNECTICUT STATE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT •

CABE:

- opposes modification of state statutes to restrict the definition of "salary" for purposes

- of calculating teachers' retirement benefits;
- urges the State of Connecticut to avoid adopting costly changes to the Teacher Retirement Act that shift the burden from the state to the local level and to maintain its responsibility for the Teacher Retirement System;
- urges the Legislature to restore the flexibility to adequately compensate retired educators serving in interim or part-time positions; and
- urges the Teacher's Retirement Board to include performance based pay for purposes of teacher's retirement, in order to preserve more options in compensation systems.

• PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS •

CABE supports maintenance of State Board of Education authority over teacher certification standards and teacher preparation program approval.

CABE supports continued action to assure that teacher preparation program standards are raised and that students in teacher preparation programs are required to complete a strong academic program, graduating with an academic major.

• TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR SALARY SYSTEMS •

CABE supports the development by local and regional boards of education of teacher and administrator salary systems that are based upon performance skills and knowledge, competence, and levels of responsibility. CABE supports the maintenance of teacher and administrator salaries that are competitive with the salaries of persons of comparable skill, quality, educational background, and professional responsibility.

• NON PARTISAN BOARDS OF EDUCATION •

CABE urges the General Assembly to adopt legislation allowing municipalities to create nonpartisan boards of education.

• SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT •

CABE supports a state requirement for an orientation and ongoing professional development for all school board members.

CABE urges boards of education to develop a policy requiring professional development for new and experienced board members.

CABE encourages local school boards to provide for adequate professional development programs for all school board members and candidates, including participation by all members in area, state and national programs and orientation for new school board members. Professional development should include the roles and responsibilities of boards, and skills needed to resolve issues in a nonpartisan manner.

CABE urges boards of education to examine and discuss annually the roles of the board and the superintendent in order to maintain a strong and effective partnership in the educational process.

• BOARD OF EDUCATION ETHICS •

CABE urges boards of education to incorporate codes of ethics and conflict of interest provisions in their Bylaws.

CABE urges the General Assembly to refrain from imposing financial disclosure provisions for volunteer elected officials.

• BOARD OF EDUCATION SERVICE •

CABE urges local political parties to seek school board candidates who are committed to student achievement and representative of the entire community.

CABE urges employers to support the civic involvement of their employees who serve as school board members.

• REMOVAL OF VERMICULITE FIREPROOFING •

CABE urges the State Department of Education/ State Department of Administrative Services to allow the opportunity for asbestos testing to be performed on vermiculite fireproofing prior to it automatically being considered asbestos.

• PREVAILING WAGES FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS •

CABE urges the legislature to raise the dollar threshold for projects subject to the prevailing wage mandate.

• PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY OF CONTRACTORS WORKING ON PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS •

CABE urges the General Assembly to hold contractors accountable for their performance on publicly funded building projects by adopting the Department of Administrative Services recommendation that maximum retainage on a project be increased from 2.5% to 10% (as it used to be).

• REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER (RESC) DUTIES DIRECTED BY THE STATE •

CABE urges the Legislature to continue to utilize the RESCs for statewide programs but in so doing to fund them adequately and refrain from mandating additional duties for the Regional Education Service Centers which would compromise their governance structure, funding process, or compete with time and resources needed for programs expected by the local districts.

• DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION CONCERNING REFERENDA •

CABE supports an amendment to Section 9-369 of the general statutes to clearly allow prior to a referendum:

- communications to employees or contractors concerning the effect of the proposal;
- expenditures of public funds to communicate information to the community concerning the effect of the proposal; and
- the use of school communication systems to provide the time, date and place of referendums.

In addition, if the court overturns a decision by the Elections Enforcement Commission in which a violation had been found by the Commission, the Commission shall pay all legal fees, costs and expenses of such person or persons.

Finance

• PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION •

In order to insure that public funds are used for public education and to improve public education, CABE urges all citizens and particularly all school board members to:

1. oppose the implementation of voucher systems as methods of financing non public education with public funds; and
2. oppose tax credits for expenditures for tuition or living expenses at private elementary and secondary schools.

• PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING •

CABE urges the Legislature to take necessary steps to ensure that the primary sources of local district funding are protected from erosion through the development of biennial state budgets which maintain grant funding at least at existing levels and avoid imposition of mandates or state tax shifting which might result in the transfer of state obligations to local property taxes.

CABE supports the concept of full state and federal funding on a current basis for any mandated programs. CABE supports the passage of legislation making state mandates on local boards of education unenforceable unless said mandates are fully funded year to year by the state legislature.

• THE FEDERAL ROLE IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION •

CABE urges the federal government to recognize education as a state and local function, while identifying, promoting and supporting the national interest in public education.

CABE supports a program of federal support for elementary and secondary public education that provides increased flexibility and funds that go directly to the local level.

• THE SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM •

The increased burden of the cost of public education, largely as a result of mandates imposed

on public school systems by state government, requires a more equitable sharing by state and local funding sources. Therefore, state legislation should recognize:

1. the responsibility of the state government to provide an equitable share of total local school expenses;
2. the need for the state to distribute funds on an adequate basis with the primary responsibility for local expenditure determination to remain with the local school board;
3. that local school districts should develop, with state assistance, procedures to ensure fiscal accountability and efficiency and the most effective use of tax dollars;
4. the need to restructure the state spending cap so all federal education funds flow to school districts;
5. the state responsibility to fund court-ordered programs; and
6. the need for financial incentives to foster interdistrict and/or regional interdistrict cooperation.

CABE supports:

1. use of the most current audited data in any school finance formula;
2. continued exploration of more accurate methods of measuring the wealth of each town, the cost of appropriately educating each child including those children who are economically disadvantaged or have other special needs, the costs associated with participation in public school choice programs, magnet schools and charter schools, and the unique cost burdens borne by poor rural and poor urban school districts;
3. monitoring of the effectiveness of school finance programs to ensure that towns spend an appropriate amount for the education of each student in order to provide substantially equal advantages taking into account differences in local costs based on relevant economic and educational factors and on course offerings of special interest in diverse Connecticut communities;
4. state funding for education provided directly to local and regional boards of education;
5. the creation of a more consistent manner of reporting and calculating per pupil expenditure;
6. reducing the cost of special education to LEAs and requiring the State to pay its

fair share of the costs directly to boards of education;

7. funding for gifted and talented programs;
8. the differential in the cost of operating a secondary only regional school district be factored into the ECS Formula and that the MBR be applied separately to schools in K-6 or K-8 districts with designated or regional high schools;
9. full state funding for participation in regional vocational-agricultural programs, including transportation costs;
10. financial incentives for school districts operating extended day kindergarten programs, after school and summer remedial programs;
11. adequate support for adult vocational education programs; and
12. restoration of the transportation grant.

• MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT •

CABE urges the Legislature to remove the statutory reduction in the MBR and encourages the Commissioner of Education to adjust the MBR in situations when a local or regional board of education seeks relief from the MBR due to significant enrollment changes.

• BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGETS •

CABE supports legislation to:

1. provide boards of education the authority to create “Special Revenue Funds” to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources;
2. allow a board of education surplus of up to 1% of the budget to carry-over to the next fiscal year without requiring approval of the local financial authority.

• TAX REFORM •

CABE supports comprehensive tax reform in Connecticut that:

1. is balanced and fair and will produce the revenues necessary to support quality public education and other needed public services;
2. reduces reliance on the local property tax, sales tax or other regressive forms of taxation; and
3. assures that distribution of the tax burden is based upon the ability to pay.

CABE opposes a state legislative cap on local property taxes.

• CADILLAC TAX •

CABE urges Congress to repeal the “Cadillac Tax” on school district health plans.

• MAGNET SCHOOL, CHOICE AND CHARTER FUNDING •

CABE urges the Connecticut legislature to take timely steps to:

- Identify adequate funding for Open Choice receiving districts to encourage the voluntary efforts of participating districts.
- Ensure that any charter school funding plan does not compromise local district financing.
- Provide a comprehensive magnet school funding formula applicable statewide for both host and interdistrict schools, sending and receiving districts.
- Continue to exempt preschool from the requirement that boards of education pay tuition for non-special education students who choose to attend a magnet school.

• ECS GRANTS FOR ALLIANCE DISTRICTS •

CABE urges the Legislature to restore full ECS funding to all districts including Alliance Districts, and create separate grants outside of ECS for Alliance District reform efforts.

• UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL •

CABE supports the state efforts to provide all children in Connecticut the opportunity to access a strong education through universal preschool opportunities.

• REGIONALISM EFFORTS •

CABE urges the State Department of Education to substantially support (financially or otherwise) cooperative efforts among districts. This support needs to be strategic, long term, financial and sustainable to realize true regionalism results.

• FUNDING FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS •

CABE urges the Legislature to:

- maintain support for school construction grants;
- increase the school construction grant percentage for new construction equal to the current percentage for renovation as new; and
- eliminate any space standard reduction percentage when factors beyond the control of the district cause lower than projected enrollment.

CABE supports updating the existing formula covering eligible overall square footage per student to take into consideration space needs such as for cafeterias/kitchens, media centers, reduced class sizes, teaching practices, technology.

Labor Relations

• TEACHER NEGOTIATION ACT •

As long as compulsory binding arbitration remains as the dispute resolution process under the Teacher Negotiations Act, CABE supports additional modifications of the Act to allow boards of education to carry out their management responsibilities, including the following:

1. There shall be no presumption by arbitrators in favor of retaining contract provisions or continuing past employment practices.
2. Arbitrators shall give the highest priority to the educational interests of the state as such interests relate to the children of the school district.
3. Arbitrators shall give priority consideration to the public interest and the financial capability of the town or towns in the school district. The consideration of financial capability shall include the town's capability as measured by its history of tax increases, personal income trends, declines in state and federal revenues, and the financial impact of state and federal mandates.
4. Establish a requirement that neutral arbitrators participate in training sessions.

CABE opposes granting teachers and administrators the opportunity to strike.

CABE supports the retention of the teacher evaluation process as a permissive subject of bargaining.

• TEACHER TERMINATION HEARINGS •

CABE urges the state legislature to allow the suspension of tenured teachers without pay prior to the completion of the termination hearing process.

• IMPACT NEGOTIATION •

CABE supports the ability of local school boards to change job descriptions unilaterally without the necessity of negotiating the impact of the changes with individual unions.

• UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION •

CABE supports the repeal of federal legislation allowing states to grant unemployment compensation to school district employees during vacations and the summer months.

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to refrain from extending such benefits to school district employees.

CABE supports modification of state statute to specifically provide that notice of intent to layoff at a future point in time, given in compliance with any legal or contractual mandate, shall not give rise to a right to collect unemployment benefits.

• MANDATED BENEFITS •

CABE supports the repeal of statutorily mandated duty free lunch periods and sick leave. These issues should be negotiated at the local level.

Special Education

• FEDERAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES •

CABE urges the federal government to revise and modify due process for students with disabilities. Specifically, CABE recognizes the need to improve on current due process proceedings to make them more effective and expeditious for the purpose of providing students with disabilities with an appropriate educational program.

CABE supports the following changes to special education law and regulations:

That the issue(s) in dispute at a due process hearing be limited to matters pertaining

- (1) to a proposed IEP;
- (2) to the existing IEP; or
- (3) to any IEP from the current school year or the school year immediately preceding the current year.

That the hearing officer be authorized and/or required to append to his/her final decision and order a statement detailing the issue on which the respective parties have prevailed, in whole or in part, and summarizing the approximate amount of hearing time spent on each issue.

That the hearing officer should be granted the same powers the Federal Courts have to reduce attorney fees if the parent unreasonably protracted the final resolution of the controversy, if the award unreasonably exceeds the hourly rate prevailing in the community, if the time and legal services furnished were excessive considering the nature of the action, or if the attorney representing the parent did not provide the school with a description of the problem relating to the proposed placement change and a proposed resolution. This should be done to insure a more equitable distribution of the financial responsibilities of the due process procedure.

That boards of education be granted more flexibility in the expulsion of special education students involved in criminal activities. Specifically, the federal government should not block states and local and regional boards of education from applying the same disciplinary standards to all students who commit the most serious offenses. If non-disabled students are expelled for certain actions, schools should be allowed to treat students with disabilities in the same manner.

That clarification of the relationship between Section 504 requirements and IDEA be provided.

That IDEA be amended to alleviate the burden placed on school districts with nonresident private school students eligible for special education identification and services.

• PLACEMENTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES •

CABE urges the state to provide for the full cost for educating students placed in private and public educational programs through DCF for children in their custody.

CABE urges the legislature to provide that the Department of Children and Families pay the full cost for special education for students attending local school districts.

• SPECIAL EDUCATION EQUITY, SERVICE AND PLACEMENT RESPONSIBILITY •

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to:

1. lower the ceiling on local responsibility for special education costs to three times the district's average per pupil expenditure and fully fund this reimbursement grant;
2. limit the funding responsibility of local and regional boards of education for special education placements to the cost of instructional programs with health related service costs and costs exceeding the ceiling absorbed by the state;
3. allow payment of reimbursable special education expenses to pass directly to the school district and in the current year; and
4. provide a funding adjustment in situations where special education children move mid-year.

• LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT •

CABE encourages the State Department of Education, institutions of Higher Education, the Connecticut General Assembly, and each local and regional board of education:

1. To consider the needs of the entire class of students when placement decisions are made.
2. To examine a variety of placement options to insure that students with special needs be placed in the least restrictive environment.
3. To provide pre-service and in-service staff development and sufficient resources for all staff to enable them to provide appropriate support to students with special needs.

• SPECIAL EDUCATION DUE PROCESS •

CABE urges the Legislature to:

1. Review the method for selection and qualification of due process hearing officers with a view toward increasing the level of professionalism and impartiality.
2. Increase available funding to attract qualified candidates and adequately compensate them for their service.
3. Provide for appellate review of due process decisions.
4. Provide that the burden of proof be on the party challenging the placement.

Certification

• PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT •

The improvement of instruction relies heavily on the continued or increased competency of existing staff members, especially in periods of stable or declining enrollments. Therefore, CABE supports:

1. local and regional boards of education developing high quality professional development programs for school district staff, alone or in cooperation with other school boards, agencies, or institutions;
2. teacher preparation institutions and universities upgrading and expanding professional development programs and graduate programs for teachers and administrators; and
3. the maintenance of high quality, rigorous programs to improve professional practice by all professional development providers.

• ALTERNATE ROUTES TO TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR CERTIFICATION •

CABE supports the alternate route to teacher and administrator certification, which increases flexibility in the manner in which academically able college graduates, including professionals seeking mid career change, may enter the teaching force.

Since 1938, CAFE has been the collective voice of more than 1,300 board of education members across the State. As CAFE has grown, so has our prominence as leaders in shaping public education programs - helping Connecticut prepare for the increasingly competitive 21th Century.

The following positions reflect the commitment of board of education members to promote public participation through local lay control of public education, to promote equal opportunity and a high quality education for all Connecticut's public school children and increase public awareness of education issues.



The distinctive line drawing of the Capitol building which appears on the cover was graciously donated to CAFE by the late Richard Welling, a talented Hartford artist. The artwork is a particularly appropriate piece for our 2017 Whole Agenda. We are delighted to be able to feature a work by this very talented